

## Que Tal Raza- Interview with Tarcila Rivera Zea (part 2)

Lozada: Do you think that the women that are now in politics that are indigenous are standing up against to the scourges that are attacking our society? Or do they need more of that preparation you speak of?

Rivera: I think some of them have better tools like Sister Sumiri, who is a lawyer. They have had better preparation. They also have better preparation. And many have confronted racism and discrimination. It is true that our country has not yet recognized historically that we are a diverse country and that in daily life; this diversity has to be recognized and respected. The language of Incan descendants cannot be looked down upon on the one hand while we speak of the wonders we have museums.

Lozada: But of course we can't go to the other extreme where there are people who say that because they are descendants of indigenous cultures have more rights than those who are mixed descendants. It's not like that right?

Rivera: It's not about more rights. We are still at the stage of getting recognition of our rights. In our country there is a huge gap between the haves and the have nots, between who is respected and who is not. We need to breach that gap. It's to recognize that someone who is at Marcom or Roosevelt for example must recognize in the same way and with respect someone who is at the Comman School. That someone who is black is not seen as someone who only opens and closes the door of a hotel, but rather as a citizen who has the same range of rights as anybody else. We have to inculcate in the educational system so that this can occur so that there is recognition of cultural contributions, in capacity, resources, and knowledge, in all the cultural sectors of our country.

Lozada: We are still speaking to Mrs. Rivera, here in Que tal Raza. We have been discussing the conclusions of the first forum of indigenous women. Another of the conclusions refers to strengthening native languages

Rivera: We have come to comprehend that having our own language does not preclude the development of a country, but rather personal cultural enrichment. Exerting our native tongue with which we were born is...

Lozada: Part of who we are.

Rivera: Exactly. Within the UN organism, we have been insisting to strengthen culture and knowledge, in all diversity. The subject of native tongue is important because in our country though there are some indigenous peoples that are in voluntary isolation, there is also the threat against some indigenous languages. From UNESCO there is an interest to revitalize indigenous language, attributing to them their value as part of our global heritage. In this sense, we are happily convincing ourselves that we must keep speaking Quechua and not feel embarrassed to speak it in the public sphere. As Allecuchianas, we

have brought about regional political recognition of Quechua in the public sphere by the government of Allacucho.

Lozada: What do you think about the fact that in our country, academic preparation at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels are administered only in Spanish?

Rivera: Most of us who are born in community have had the experience that we speak only one language up to the age of 6. Suddenly we think that attending school will provide other opportunities but what do we find? In school, the problems of self esteem begin because you are taught in Spanish but speak only your native tongue. Instead of affirming the identity and strengthening the self esteem of a child that speaks Quechua, it is like delegitimizing. You have these qualifications but they do not suffice. We then have to try to speak Spanish. But this should not continue. The educational system must be intercultural and recognize the contributions of diverse cultures. Our history must also be represented, not as the defeated as it has been in history books that depict us as those that fight among brethren. What are we transmitting to future generations? We don't believe this system should continue. Instead, it should be inclusive.

Lozada: Inclusive. Here we are seeing women from the jungle that are dancing with other women, and are sharing without making any distinctions.

Rivera: Yes that is a representation of the Allawuasca ceremony of the Amazonians.

Lozada: How does this ceremony take place?

Rivera: It is an act of purification, a spiritual act. They performed it as they practice it, in their own tongue. From the Andean region, the men also took part in a representation of a ritual performed during drought to ask for rain. And it ended quite nicely when instead of rain, a frog jumped out a bush. It ended with a celebration of a lot of joy.

Lozada: What about the importance of the environment that you insist that industrialized countries protect because they make a lot of money but contaminate the entire planet.

Rivera: Yes, it is very well known where the problem of environmental contamination, climatic disequilibrium, droughts, the melting ice in the north. The subject of environment and climate change is of great concern for indigenous peoples, because the first affected are indigenous peoples.